

SCOTLAND'S STORY

19

**Spark of religious
revolution ignites
flames of division**

**Knox: rebel priest
with radical cause**

**The hide-and-seek
saga of Scotland's
own crown jewels**

**Death didn't stop
the grim torturers**

**The great Flannan
light riddle: where
were the keepers?**



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ATLANTIC
OCEAN

1517

Martin Luther nails his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenburg. Protestantism is born.



1525

Scottish parliament tries to ban Luther's works – but with little success.



1546

Leading reformer George Wishart is burned for heresy. Just three months later his persecutor, Cardinal Beaton, is murdered at St Andrews.



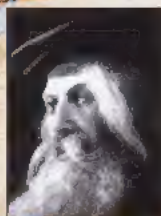
1557

The Lords of the Congregation are formed by a group of nobles who support the Reformation.



1547

John Knox, who had been Wishart's bodyguard, is captured by the French and becomes a galley slave.



1560

Edinburgh is swept by religious revolution. Reformation parliament abolishes Pope's authority in Scotland.



1559

A small boy throws a stone at a priest in Perth following a John Knox sermon. It leads to a riot.



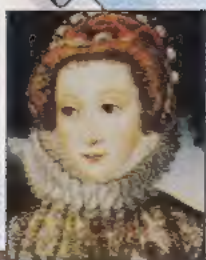
1573

The Reformed Church is fully established in law, but the nation remains divided.



1567

Deposition of Mary, Queen of Scots, is followed by six years of civil war.



In Part 20:
Mary Queen of Scots:
Swimming against the tide?

PART OF
IRELAND

North
Channel

PART OF
ENGLAND



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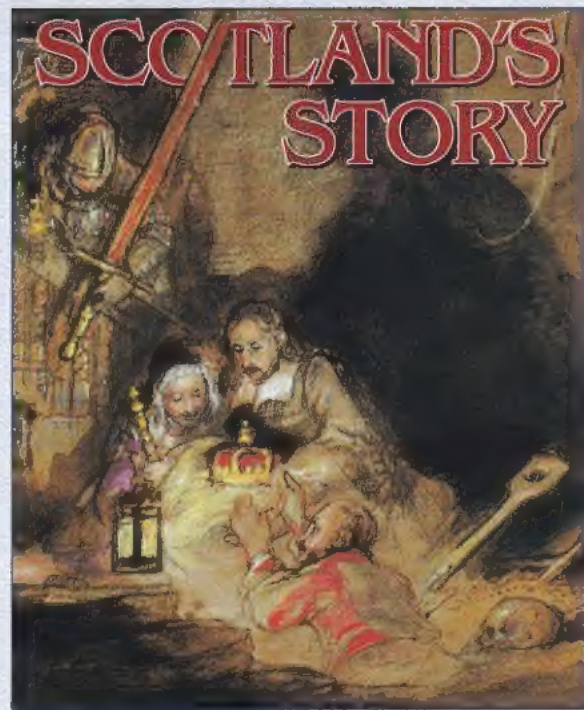
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COVER: The Honours of Scotland are buried in a country church to save them from Oliver Cromwell.

A dour purge or a blow for democracy?

More than four centuries have passed since the Reformation of the 16th century, but it's an issue which can still ignite hot debate today.

For some it's the fountainhead of democracy that placed the central tenet of life – religion – in the hands of the people for the first time. Ordinary Scots could now read the word of God for themselves, and they had a say in how the church was to be run at a local level.

But others view the Reformation as a dour purge in which the desire to overthrow the establishment turned into blind hatred of everything and anything associated with the 'Roman' Church. The old corruption continued in new forms, and the meaning of the Bible was often twisted or misinterpreted.

Both of these views contain much that is true, but understanding the Reformation properly requires us to think of it less as a sudden and dramatic event, and more as a lengthy and complex period of change.

Surely there can be no more potent symbol of the Reformation than the image of John Knox delivering one of his

fiery denunciations of the established Church.

But Knox was far from alone in driving the Reformation in Scotland. In fact others, such as Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart, were inspirational figures, who both paid the ultimate price for their beliefs – they were brutally executed in 1528 and 1546 respectively.

And while Knox was a slave on a French galley and later preaching on the Continent in the 1550s, several other key individuals drove the Reforming tide forwards.

But Knox's great achievement was his ability to produce effective Reformation propaganda.

His skills as a writer and orator have thus ensured him a special place in Reformation history.

The Honours of Scotland are among the most ancient crown jewels in Europe.

They were hidden away from Oliver Cromwell, who destroyed the original English crown and sceptre.

Later they were dug up, but lost again – seemingly forever.

Then, thanks to the efforts of ardent patriot Sir Walter Scott, they were eventually found locked in a cell in Edinburgh Castle.

Religious revolution



■ Martin Luther's great literary achievement was the translation of the Latin Bible into German. This illustration of the seven-headed

divides the country



serpent from Revelations is from the Luther Bible, circa 1530.

When Luther's challenge to church practices spread to Scotland, the reaction was explosive

The Church may have a divine mission to the world. But through the ages it has been made up of flawed, imperfect and sometimes even misguided men and women. And there's the rub. Its story over the centuries is very much one of waves of reform and renewal, punctuated by periods of lethargy and decline.

Almost from the day it began, the Church had to battle with what it called the sins of 'schism' – division and separation – and of 'heresy' – beliefs at odds with received religious thought and punishable by death.

In the Middle Ages, a serious and lasting split had been the breach between the western Church, which looked to the Pope in Rome (or, for a spell, in Avignon) and the eastern or Orthodox Church which had long recognised the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople, some of whose territories had fallen to the Turks.

As the Roman Church grew in strength and wealth, it used its coercive power to stamp out dissent and foster unity. But by the 16th century, the European Reformation shattered the western Church's fragile unity. And it undermined the whole Medieval system.

In a sense, the Reformation has neither a beginning nor an end. But it is helpful to associate its start with Martin Luther's challenge. Luther's searching questions reverberated near and far with shattering effect. Once opened, the

Pandora's box could not be shut. His defiant call was for reform – reform not just of Church life and practice, desirable as these were; reform not just of papal claims and pretensions, which many thought needed pruning; but reform of religious belief itself. And this went to the heart of the matter. For Luther, the doctrine was faulty. The crisis hit the Church where it was most vulnerable – at its very authority and teaching.

At the centre of Luther's clarion call lay the question of salvation. How did Christians achieve salvation? What was the right way to Heaven? How were Heaven's gates unlocked for repentant sinners? The minor sideshow of unscrupulous pardoners selling papal pardons or indulgences and tawdry trinkets as relics to the wealthy – and not-so wealthy – who thought they had been let off for sinning, was exposed as fraudulent.

More importantly, it highlighted Luther's anxiety about forgiveness of sins. His quest was to try to understand what God's 'justice' meant. The upshot was Luther's verdict: God's justice was not vengeful and punishing but loving and merciful. God's forgiveness was free and undeserved. Salvation was through faith alone. It was not, as the Church had taught, by linking faith to doing good works, gaining merit and so earning eternal bliss.

This was a crucial matter. Sooner or later, it was almost bound to affect everyone who thought about life and death. Most folk had an interest – an acutely personal ▶



■ An imaginary reformist meeting is pictured in a 17th-century engraving. Included around the table are Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox.

► interest – in discovering precisely how they might be saved. This was especially true in an age when people lived their lives in the unchallenged certainty that this world was a stepping stone to the next. Was Luther right or wrong?

Of German peasant stock, Luther was once an obscure Augustinian friar and theology teacher in an equally obscure German university. But now he hit the headlines as the man who resolutely refused to be silenced either by the Pope or by excommunication from the Church.

His views made news. Very much a 'workaholic', he produced more or less a book a fortnight for a quarter of a century. He would not keep quiet. He was a compulsive and compelling literary genius.

The spark of Luther's revolt kindled the fire of the Reformation as it spread across the German states. Sometimes princes and kings, with a variety of motives, supported the

message of the Reformation in Germany, Scandinavia, even England.

In Switzerland and Rhineland a more thorough-going Protestantism took root, moulded by the reformers of Strasbourg, Zürich and Geneva, who tried to restore primitive Christianity in its pristine simplicity.

This phase marked the consolidation of the Reformation in northern Europe, and John Calvin became its leading spokesman.

In some lands the progress of reform proved patchy and regional, as in France where the Crown was not minded to cut the ties with Rome.

Yet again, Scotland showed how Reformation could succeed through rebellion and revolution in defiance of the Crown. And something similar happened in the northern Netherlands. The paths to reform were many and varied.

Religious issues, plainly, were not

nurtured in a vacuum but within a richly-complex intellectual, social and political setting. The outcome was that the message of the Reformation reached most levels in society and ultimately transformed the course of European history.

But this was also an era in which the Catholic Church fought back. It undertook reform and achieved spiritual renewal in a process usually labelled 'the Counter-Reformation'. It recovered from the shock of the Reformation. Yet it failed to obliterate the movement.

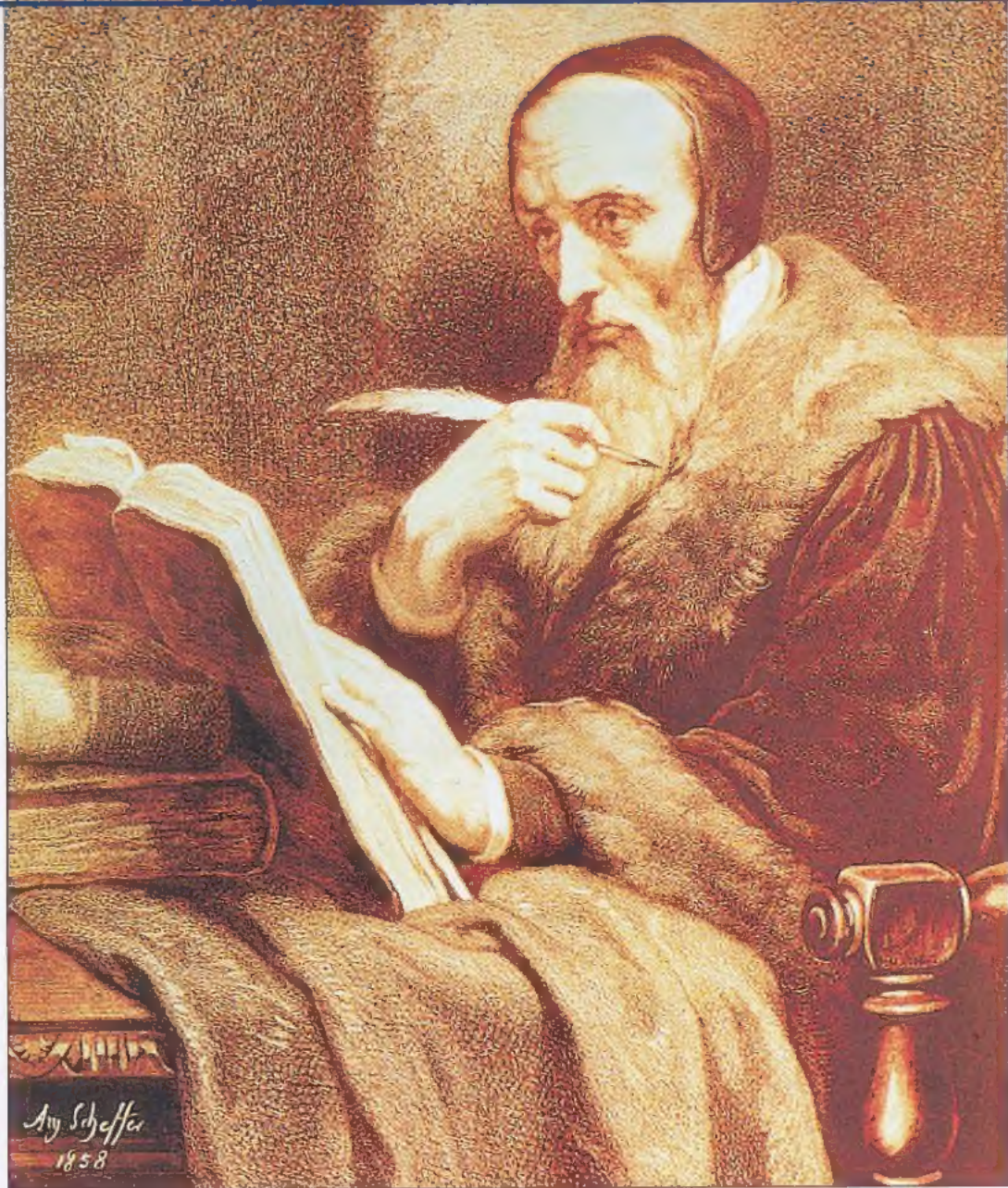
In Scotland, the Reformation as a formal break with Rome came late in the day – in 1560. But official action to curb reforming activity at home can be traced back almost as far as Luther's revolt in 1517. By 1525 the Scottish parliament was sufficiently alarmed that it tried to ban the works of Luther from circulating in Scotland; but its

legislation had scant success. The Bishop of Aberdeen reported outbreaks of Lutheran activity in his area; and in the west, Glasgow's Archbishop voiced similar worries. Something was afoot.

By convicting Patrick Hamilton, a brilliant young scholar at St Andrews University, who was burned for 'Luther's pravity' in 1528, the Church gave Scotland her first martyr of the Reformation, just 11 years after Luther's protest.

A series of executions for heresy followed. Some suspects fled to other lands, others kept their thoughts to themselves or shared them in trusted, closely-knit family 'cells' of believers. Protestantism had gone underground. Periodically, it resurfaced.

That said, the road to reform in Scotland was not the barbarous and bloody affair it was in England. There Henry VIII, who saw himself as a



■ The Reformation's leading spokesman: a romanticised 19th-century portrait of French theologian John Calvin.

non-papal Catholic, executed papists and Protestants alike. His daughter, Mary Tudor, put to death 300 English Protestants in a futile bid to change men's – and women's – minds, and under her half-sister, Elizabeth, it was the turn of 200 Catholics to lose their lives for their beliefs.

In contrast, blood shed in 'violent' Scotland at the Reformation was of some 20 Protestants whom the Catholic authorities put to death and; on the other side, two or three Catholics were executed for their religion. To us today, of course, these executions were two dozen too many.

In Scotland, as elsewhere, the doctrinal revolt was led by disenchanted churchmen. An irrepressible force had been unleashed. Its resilience baffled the authorities.

Despite an unfavourable political climate, the Protestant movement was not confined to a small group of

intellectuals. It attracted wider support. Some nobles and lairds were sympathetic. So too were townsfolk in Leith, Edinburgh, Dundee, St Andrews, Aberdeen and Kirkcaldy. These were all east-coast ports with ready access to Germany, Scandinavia and England, where Luther's beliefs were rife.

There were periodic outbursts of iconoclasm – the smashing of religious statues and images in acts of defiant desecration.

In Ayr, Lord Ochiltree's son smashed an image in the parish church in 1533 and about the same time a statue of the Virgin Mary was decapitated in another church in the town. Further instances followed in Perth and Dundee, possibly sparked off by Protestant preaching or propaganda. Parliament responded in 1541 by passing an act against heresy and the smashing of images.

Then, in December 1542, King

James V, who favoured the links with France and Rome, died of a broken heart, it was said, after his defeat by the English at the Battle of Solway Moss. He left his baby daughter, Mary, as queen of Scots.

Almost at once, in 1543, there were signs that Scotland might have a Reformation carried through with the Government's support.

Negotiations began for the marriage of the infant Mary to young Prince Edward of England, and England had already cast off the Pope. Despite the Church's opposition, the Scottish parliament now permitted Scots to own and read the scriptures in Scots or English.

Attacks took place on friaries in Perth and Dundee, and on the Abbey of Lindores in Fife, whose monks were expelled. Arbroath abbey was sacked. Violence erupted in Montrose and Aberdeen, with assaults on the friaries there. Two

Aberdonians with Protestant sympathies were convicted of hanging an image of St Francis. Image-breaking had become a revolutionary device for direct action. Meanwhile, as Governor of the kingdom, the Earl of Arran signalled his intentions by installing two Protestant preachers at court.

But Arran's experiment did not last. The marriage treaty with England did not succeed. Old enmities soon resurfaced. The alliance with France was renewed. And Cardinal Beaton's growing power in Scotland forced Arran to watch his step.

Religion had reinforced politics in producing a pro-English party in Scotland but that party had lost ground with Arran's temporising.

The Cardinal's conservative faction held sway. English policy therefore aimed at fostering pro-English and reforming ►



■ Earliest likeness of Luther (1525) by Lucas Cranach. ■ Cardinal Beaton: ordered George Wishart's arrest.

The message of the Reformation spread by the printed, spoken and sung word

► elements in Scotland with the aim of detaching Scotland from France. The destructive English invasions which followed may have gone some way towards discrediting the French alliance, but they produced no affection for England.

Yet in their train came the preaching mission of George Wishart, which changed everything.

Wishart, who had studied at Louvain in modern Belgium and Cambridge, came home in 1543 and rented a house in Montrose near the kirk where he expounded the scriptures to all who showed interest. He then set out on preaching tours in 1544-45 which took him to Dundee, Ayrshire, Angus, Perth, Fife and the Lothians.

His work was remarkable for the relative freedom with which he preached openly in churches and for the size of the following he attracted. His evangelism helped popularise the doctrines of the Swiss reformers and he translated into English the first Swiss confession of 1536.

He escaped attempts on his life, was renowned for his mild and loving nature, but was finally arrested at Ormiston in East Lothian

on the orders of Cardinal Beaton, and burned at St Andrews in 1546.

At his execution, he addressed his "Christian brethren and sisters", and commended his spirit to the "Saviour of the world" in the certain hope that "my soul shall sup with my Saviour Christ this night... for whom I suffer".

Events moved fast. On the heels of Wishart's execution came the murder of his persecutor, Cardinal Beaton. And, again, popular agitation took the form of renewed threats to Church properties. An act of council, passed in 1546, expressed the fear that "evil-disposed persons will invade, destroy, cast down and withhold abbeys, kirks, as well as parish kirks and other religious places, friaries of all orders, nunneries, chapels and other spiritual men's houses".

Churchmen, friars and monks must have felt jittery as they awaited developments. Intermittently, proceedings against heretics continued. But there were few executions. Reforming opinions circulated even in faraway Orkney where a chaplain was said to have embraced heresy with 'tenacity and pertinacity'. The movement seemed limited in neither a social nor a geographical sense.

Between 1547 and 1549, English forces occupied south-east Scotland as far north as Dundee. Scottish collaborators were numerous and their motives were partly religious.

During this phase, reforming influences reaching Scotland were

increasingly those which arrived not by sea from Lutheran lands but by land from England, where the views of Swiss reformers had come to the fore.

The message of the Reformation spread by the printed, spoken and sung word. From secret house 'cells' and field conventicles, underground Protestantism gradually surfaced.

In the market place, in taverns, at fairs and festivals religious ideas could be exchanged as readily as other commodities. Wandering preachers spread the word.

By 1557, the Protestant 'Lords of the Congregation' pledged

themselves to defend the preachers and work for a reformed church. They meant what they said.

As England and France competed for domination of Scotland, the greater threat seemed to come from France. Mary, Queen of Scots had been sent to France in 1548 to be brought up at the French court as the prospective bride to the heir to the French throne. In her absence, Scotland was ruled by her French mother, Mary of Guise. French troops garrisoned Scottish strongholds. The English were repulsed.

Frenchmen occupied high offices of state in Scotland. Were Mary to become Queen of France, as she did in 1559, her descendants would rule both France and Scotland. Scotland would be absorbed by the French monarchy. All that seemed to rule out the possibility of a Reformation in Scotland supported by the Crown. A Protestant Reformation could come about only by a revolt in defiance of the sovereign's wishes.

Despite half-hearted attempts at internal reform begun by Archbishop Hamilton in 1549, the old church, seemingly demoralised and lacking in leadership, collapsed like a pack of cards when the revolution arrived in 1559. And when the revolution took hold, it was very much a dual revolt against Rome and France.

Those with purely political objectives, who threw in their lot with the reformers in opposing Mary of Guise, clearly believed they had allied themselves to a powerful party with significant support.

Already the 'Beggars' Summons' had appeared on the doors of the



■ St Andrews Castle: it was here that Protestant reformer George Wishart (opposite) was burned to death in 1546. Three months later, his persecutor, Cardinal Beaton was murdered and his body dangled over the castle walls.

frisaries, threatening the friars with violence if they didn't hand over their houses to the poor and infirm.

John Knox, who hitherto had not been central to the enterprise, made for Scotland from Geneva. His rousing sermon at Perth led to mob violence. Confrontation loomed between the 'Congregation' and the government.

As the insurgents resorted to arms, they felt sufficiently strong to 'depose' Mary of Guise from the regency in October, 1559, and set up a provisional government.

But they were not strong enough to deal with the French garrison in Leith.

English intervention tipped the balance when their fleet sailed into the Firth of Forth in January, 1560.

When England and France agreed to withdraw their forces and leave Scotland to the Scots, the Reformation parliament met – to sweepingly approve a Protestant confession of faith, abolish the Pope's authority in Scotland, and forbid the celebration of mass.

That done, it left the details of the religious settlement to a committee of reformers.

They produced their Book of Discipline in 1560, a mission statement which gave shape and content to the reformed church's structure. The task ahead was enormous.

Even in that moment, a measure of the reformers' achievement can be sensed in the renewed emphasis on congregations and their needs – pastoral care, educational opportunity, relief for the needy.

These were given priority. But the people themselves were now, for the first time, going to have a real say in how the Kirk was run, including the hiring and firing of ministers.

No less revolutionary were the changes in worship. Services were in Scots, not Latin. The open scriptures were studied in the language of the people. Psalm books and service-books were placed in the hands of the people, who were now invited to take centre-stage. They sang the psalms.

The intricate music of the past, which only trained choristers could perform, was abandoned. Worship became simpler, and visual aids were discarded.

It is surely remarkable – and a measure of their success – that today most churches have moved in the direction of adopting the ideas and vision of those reformers four and a half centuries ago. ●



How the Reformation fire ignited and spread

Though the rise of Protestantism captured the state, the real conversion of most of the population took a couple of generations

What was the Reformation?

The unlikely starting point for the religious strife that tore Europe apart was the German theologian Martin Luther nailing his protest demanding church reform to a church door. Hence the name Protestantism.

Using the tools of Renaissance scholarship, Luther went back to the text of the Bible and rejected what he saw as all unscriptural church practices and demanded reform.

History shows that many reform movements were taken up by the Church but Luther rejected the Pope's authority. That usually led to a charge of heresy and being burned at the stake. But the Church gave him time to reconsider. Luther had his doubts and wrestled with his demons but in the end decided he could not go against his conscience.

Fortunately for Luther, the backing of German princes ensured his survival. Harnessing the power of the printing press, Protestant literature spread across Western Europe sparking a religious conflict that divided Christendom.

What about Scotland?

Scotland's Reformation was different from Germany's or England's. Where they had a king or prince who 'nationalised' the church, Scotland's was born in defiance of such royal authority. The Protestants were a minority of the population and although some of them were martyred for their faith, persecution was on the whole sporadic.

Despite their small numbers, some Protestants held influential positions like James Stewart, the half-brother of Mary, Queen of Scots. He was one of the Lords of the Congregation who led the

Reformation in Scotland and protected preachers like Knox. So to some extent this was a top-down Reformation rather than a popular uprising.

Nor should the Reformation be seen as a single event; it was more like a process. The year that Scotland officially broke with Rome was 1560 but it wasn't until 1573 – after the six years of civil war which followed the deposition of Mary in 1567 – that the Scottish monarchy became Protestant and the new Church was made legal.

Although Protestantism had captured the state, real conversion of most of the population to genuine belief probably took a couple of generations. Only by the time of the National Covenant in 1638 could historians look back on the Reformation of 1560 and mythologise a rapid Protestant awakening.

Catholic and Protestant?

There was a wide spectrum of opinion that desired reform of the Church in Scotland, perhaps due to people seeking more personal forms of piety. Only a minority favoured Protestantism, and even then they disagreed on which form of Protestantism was the right one: Lutheranism? Calvinism? Eventually, Calvinism triumphed, but that took several years. Unlike John Knox, who believed that one was either of God or the Devil, most people believed there was a middle ground in religion.

Knox's views would mean you couldn't trade with your Catholic neighbours, might have to disown your parents, and might even have to throw your spouse out of town. Most Scots were far more sensible and just got on with living with each other.

Catholicism and Protestantism had not been

The 'auld maner' did not go easily

It's a popular misconception that some time during 1560 the people of Scotland suddenly awoke one morning to discover that they had all converted to Protestantism.

The truth is, in fact, far more intriguing than such an arbitrary date would suggest.

The Reformation was far from being a 'fait accompli' in 1560, and indeed by 1567 the whole project looked to be on the verge of collapse.

In Edinburgh in 1567, the General Assembly was up in arms, stating that it thought it "needfull to repaire the decay and ruine of that Kirk so vertueously begun amongst

us" – clear evidence that the Reformers had a long way to go.

In reality, in many areas of Scotland, people were still upholding the old doctrines by the end of the 1560s.

According to the Black Book of Taymouth, the Reformation initially made little headway in rural Perthshire, with one priest remarking how little he was moved by the Lutheran ideas in the east-coast burghs.

In Orkney, Bishop Adam Bothwell wrote in February, 1561, to the Laird of Merchiston that the huge multitude of the people still gathered, forcing their way into the Cathedral, to hear Mass and marry couples 'in the auld maner'. And in

Aberdeen it was not until 1574 that Reformation fever hit the town. Indeed, by 1590 the Church there still bore many essential outlines of a Roman Catholic parish.

In Dumfries in 1587, the Assembly discovered there was "no resorting to the Kirk in many places" and that there were "scarcely three ministers" to be found. Many areas of the Highlands were still influenced by the 'Roman' faith by the end of the 16th century. By the 1620s, Franciscan missionaries to the Highlands found that the people they visited still recalled Roman Catholic practices, and were easily reconciled with the old faith.



■ The incomplete John Knox: he is pictured top centre in this unfinished painting by Sir David Wilkie.

defined systematically at the time of the Reformation. Indeed, 'Catholicism' itself wasn't defined until the Counter-Reformation of the 1570s.

Power politics?

The Reformation had a political dimension, too. France and England had been competing for Scotland since the death of James V left the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, as heir to the kingdom. The run-up to the Reformation was held against the background of England's Protestantism and France's Catholicism. It became not merely a question of religious denomination but of power politics.

During the Rough Wooing England had tried to force the hand of Mary into marriage with Henry VIII's son. The French supplied the Scots with military men and firepower to resist Henry. Both sides spent a fortune to woo Scots but the Catholic French triumphed. It's hardly surprising to find that, as a consequence, Mary's regent and mother, Mary of Guise, regarded Protestants as a fifth column. The Reformation succeeded not through the Protestants wanting to convert Scotland, rather it was to remove French dominance.

Why is it important?

The Church played a crucial role in the everyday lives of most 16th-century Scots. It was responsible for matters we consider vital today – education, health, social welfare and discipline.

It was also the means of expressing your own inner spirituality. Changes in the Church could affect your chances of salvation and deny you the opportunity to express them.

After the Reformation split the Church, there were two roads to salvation, each of which claimed to be true. It mattered which one the Scottish state promoted. Your immortal soul could be at peril if the government made you practise the wrong faith – a real question for a society that had only Christian explanations of the world.

The political problem as to which one the state was to be, wasn't resolved until the middle of the 18th century, when the secular state came into

being – but in wider society the problem still lingers today.

Wanton destruction?

Iconoclasm, or the smashing of holy images, was certainly part of the Reformation. No doubt it has deprived Scots of a rich artistic legacy. These items must have lost their religious potency for some to be able to destroy them. But the destruction of religious images didn't end artistic culture. New forms were developed.

The destruction perpetrated by the Reformers shouldn't be dismissed as wanton violence. It was targeted. The friaries bore the brunt of it as they were the main competition to Protestant preachers. As a result, their buildings were completely destroyed. But others were left to crumble. The monasteries were not destroyed. The mass was forbidden but the monks were allowed to stay in their posts until they opted to leave. Many did, and the new Protestant Church drew much of its clergy from the pre-Reformation Church.

The great cathedrals were re-used where no parish kirk was available, often with one half being converted into a kirk while the other fell into ruins. Much of Scotland's great pre-Reformation buildings are now ruins as they were no longer useful except as building materials for local communities.

Knox and Mary

The Reformation's most famous image is the confrontation between Knox and Mary, Queen of Scots. Yet both were rather odd icons to select. Mary had grown up in France and trained as a Catholic queen for that nation. So in a sense she was a stranger in her own land. But Knox, too, was a rather rootless individual. He had trained as a Catholic priest, and had been a galley slave and a minister in England. He was one of the few Protestants who had been to Calvinist Geneva. Most had either stayed quietly at home or had fled abroad never to return. Generally, Scots didn't take to either extreme, and the Scottish Parliament's banning of the mass must have caused some consternation to a predominately Catholic population ●

TIMELINE

1517

Protestantism is born when Martin Luther nails his theses to a church door in Germany. His ideas quickly spread to Scotland.

1528

Scotland's first Reformation martyr, Patrick Hamilton, is burned at St Andrews.

1533-41

Parliament forced to legislate after statues and images are smashed in churches in Perth, Ayr and Dundee.

1546

March: Protestant evangelist George Wishart is burned for heresy at St Andrews.

1546

May: Wishart's death is quickly followed by the murder of his executioner, Cardinal David Beaton.

1557

Influential Scots Reformers bind themselves together under the title Lords of the Congregation.

1559

Protestant Revolution now underway as Reformers set up a provisional government.

1560

Reformation parliament abolishes the Pope's authority in Scotland and bans celebration of mass.


1567

General Assembly reports the Reformed Church to be in disarray.

1573

Reformed Church becomes fully established in law.





■ John Knox delivers one of his fiery sermons at St Giles, Edinburgh, to a congregation which includes Queen Mary's half-sister, the Countess of Argyll.

The rebel priest who carried a sword for reform

When John Knox was a French galley slave, he still found time to edit Protestant texts. He was nothing if not determined

The Reformation had an explosive and lasting impact on much of northern Europe. Martin Luther, the great reformer, triggered the revolt in Germany

Our image of Luther, Catholic priest and theologian, is shaped by the defiant stand he took in nailing his 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg in 1517

As the Reformation message spread, John Calvin, a Lutheran fugitive from France, made Geneva a metropolis for Swiss Protestantism. He created a model reformed city where he tried to regulate folk's manners and faith. Opponents were firmly punished – he applauded the Genevan authorities' decision in 1553 to burn at the stake Michael Servetus, the wandering Spanish reformer, for his wayward religious beliefs

In this, if in little else, Calvin reached the same judgment on Servetus as Roman Catholics when they had earlier condemned him to death for heresy

Luther and Calvin, then, were the two continental giants whose impression on John Knox, the fledgling Scottish reformer, was nothing short of electrifying. Knox's own entry into the religious struggle was unusual and hardly centre-stage. He emerged from obscurity in his ►



■ Although he emerged from obscurity, Knox is now a national icon – with a place in Edinburgh's Wax Museum.

► 30s, a Catholic priest and tutor to the sons of some East Lothian lairds, to become, of all things, the bodyguard and disciple of George Wishart – a charismatic Protestant preacher.

Once a schoolmaster in Montrose, Wishart had tasted the Reformation on the Continent and in England. With English encouragement, he was active in Scotland during the mid-1540s – a period when the repression of religious dissent in the years after Patrick Hamilton's martyrdom in St Andrews in 1528 had begun to ease.

Wishart's preaching held Knox spellbound. Knox, the renegade priest, now wielded a great two-handed sword for his master's defence. In that moment, he committed himself to his chosen cause. His vision was nothing less than the victory of British Protestantism. This meant forging a new friendship with the 'auld enemy', England.

England under Henry VIII had already rejected papal authority. But Knox's plan also meant ending

Scotland's traditional alliance with France, for the French crown retained the connection with Rome.

As Knox so clearly saw, Scotland's stark choice was either to retain her time-honoured links with France and Rome or jettison them in favour of an accord with England and the Reformation. Indeed, the time was not long distant when Knox himself would enter the ministry of the Protestant Church of England, and choose an Englishwoman – a literate one – as his first wife.

He became in some ways an Anglo-Scot, and his perspective was a peculiarly 'British' one. Indeed, at one point in later life, such was his fame, he was even invited to preach in Ireland – an invitation he thoughtfully declined.

Throughout his reforming career, Knox realised how the future of Protestantism in England and Scotland hung together. He knew, too, just how much hinged precariously on the wider political situation. So he turned his hand to writing, becoming a propagandist for his cause. He knew the value of

the written word in an age when the printing press was becoming the main means of mass communication – not just among the literate but among the less literate who sat around when books were read aloud. The printed word of Knox, the propagandist, complemented the spoken word of Knox, the fiery preacher.

That lesson of the interplay of politics and religion had been firmly grasped by Knox as early as 1546. At that point his master, George Wishart – whom he ought to have protected – was captured and burned for heresy in St Andrews on the orders of David Beaton, the Cardinal Archbishop of St Andrews. Knox's little world in that instant must have imploded. His cause looked utterly lost.

Yet, at this very moment of despair, a small group of reforming lairds in Fife murdered the persecuting cardinal in his castle in revenge for Wishart's execution.

Beaton's assassination had been the object of English plots for some time, so when this band of disgruntled dissidents seized the

castle in St Andrews – Scotland's ecclesiastical capital – they hoped for English intervention and for a revolt in favour of the Reformation.

In the wake of these developments, Knox was persuaded to become preacher to the 'Castilians' who had taken the castle. But the calculations misfired.

When French reinforcements stormed the castle in 1547, Knox and his associates were taken prisoner as galley slaves to Normandy. Though he remained silent on 'what torment I sustained in the galleys' during his 19 months as an oarsman, Knox astonishingly did find time – presumably in stormy winter weather when his galley lay at anchor – to edit a Protestant confession of faith. This work had been composed by fellow reformer Henry Balnaves, a distinguished Scots lawyer imprisoned at Rouen, who sent him the text for revision.

This was surely the most unusual of pastimes for a galley slave, but it illustrates Knox's determination, even when subjected to the yoke of French oars.

Finally freed, he made for England to preach to congregations at Berwick and Newcastle, as well as at the court of England's King Edward VI. But his hopes of a more radical Reformation in England were dashed with the accession in 1553 of Catholic Mary Tudor – 'Bloody Mary' – and a renewed persecution of Protestants.

Like many English Protestants, Knox found refuge on the Continent, at Frankfurt and Geneva, where he ministered to congregations of English exiles. For him, Calvin's Geneva became 'the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles'. It was 'the most godly reformed church and city of the world'.

Apart from a preaching mission in 1555–56, Knox was absent from Scotland in that decisive decade of the Scottish Reformation. The work of Reformation belonged to others – to influential nobles like Lord James Stewart, James V's natural son; the Duke of Châtellherault, head of the Hamiltons; the Earls of Argyll, Glencarn, Morton, and others. A host of lairds and numerous townfolk were fortified by a handful of preachers as the crisis approached.

From afar, Knox could merely exhort and counsel – but hardly direct – those at home, through letter and tract.

With England's return to Catholicism under Mary Tudor whose husband was Philip II of Spain – Scottish Protestants could no

linger hope for help from England. At home, they also found the grip of France tighten as James V's French widow, Mary of Guise, acted as regent for her absent daughter Mary, Queen of Scots. The latter, once a prospective bride to the heir to the English throne, was now engaged to marry the heir to the French throne. And she, of course, had been brought up at the French court as a Catholic in religion.

In Knox's eyes, the progress of the Reformation was thwarted by female rulers. Mary Tudor, Mary of Guise and Mary, Queen of Scots. Hence his outburst in his famous First Blast against the Monstrous Regiment of Women in 1558. But the work appeared at a singularly ill-judged moment, when Protestant Elizabeth, who had no patience for Knox's theorising, replaced Mary Tudor as queen of England.

Once again, however, the way was open for Protestants in Scotland and England to make common cause against the threat they perceived from France and Rome. Besides, Elizabeth was ready to offer the reforming and pro-English party in Scotland a measure of financial and military support in a bid to offset the presence of French troops and officials in Scotland.

English policy aimed at detaching Scotland from a French, and Catholic, sphere of influence.

From 1557 onwards, influential Scots bound themselves together to work for the establishment of a Protestant Church. They called themselves 'The Lords of the Congregation' and their supporters rallied to the cause with arms. By May, 1559, Knox himself responded by returning home. His fiery sermon in St John's Church at Perth had consequences which startled even Knox himself: mob rule was unleashed in the burgh. The revolution was underway.

Military operations followed. From France came news that Mary, Queen of Scots had become Queen of France with her husband's accession as Francis II. At home, the reforming cause was saved by the intervention of English forces on Scottish soil. Mary of Guise died in June, 1560. The insurgents set up a Protestant provisional government. Thereafter, the English and French agreed to leave Scotland.

The 'Reformation Parliament', meeting in Edinburgh where Knox had become minister, approved a Protestant Confession of Faith, which Knox had helped draft. It forbade the celebration of mass and



■ This portrait in stained glass by James Ballantine was gifted to the John Knox House in Edinburgh in the 1850s.

abolished the Pope's authority in Scotland. Knox and some of his colleagues then produced a Book of Discipline with its emphasis on representative church government and congregational participation, designed to replace the clerical hierarchy of the past. Its visionary aims, encompassing the problems of poor relief and the cherished notion of creating a school in every parish, established a framework for the future.

Then came the unexpected news that Mary's husband, the king of France, a youth aged not quite 17,

was dead. The likelihood was that Mary would return home to rule in person over a country where the Reformation had made decisive headway.

Knox's denunciation of Mary's private mass, on her home coming in 1561, was predictable. But, far from undermining the Reformation, Mary's conduct – with her eye ever on the English throne – actually benefited the reformed Kirk. She gave it not only a measure of finance but effective recognition in law.

Mary, who once regarded Knox as "the most dangerous man in all the

realm", dismissed him as an "old fool". Certainly for the politicians John Knox's usefulness was over. To them, he was more of a liability than an asset. Yet he could still be a dangerous old fool.

This was shown in 1567 when Mary was deposed in favour of her son, James VI. Knox provided the case for Mary's enforced abdication and he preached at the coronation of her infant son.

He survived long enough, till his death in 1572, to see the church he had helped shape enjoy the fruits of legal and financial establishment. ●

The heroes who saved the 'soul of our nation'

Scotland's Crown Jewels are among the oldest in Europe. But you can only see them today because of the persistence of Sir Walter Scott, and the brave men and women who hid them from Cromwell's army



The Crown in its present form was made for King James V in 1540 by the Edinburgh goldsmith John Moir.

The Sword – made by Domenico da Sutri – was presented to King James IV by Pope Julius II in 1507.

Before ratifying the Treaty of Union with England in 1707, members of the Scottish Parliament made a major stipulation. They insisted the Honours of Scotland should remain in the country 'at all times coming and, in spite of many difficulties, that wish has been upheld

The 'Honours Three' – a crown, a sword and a sceptre – are today on display in the Crown Room of Edinburgh Castle, where one of the most frequently

asked questions from visitors who file past them is "How much are they worth?"

That question misses the point, because it is impossible to put a price on the soul of a nation. And for many, Scotland's soul is what those three pieces represent.

The Honours of Scotland on display in Edinburgh Castle are the genuine articles – not like the English Crown Jewels at the Tower of London which are only replicas.

And the Scottish royal regalia is among the oldest in Europe, older than England's and probably ranking second in antiquity only to Hungary's Crown of St Stephen, which was first used in a royal coronation in 1166.

The original Scottish crown was worn by monarchs from Edward I to Charles II. It was broken down into three pieces – the crown, the sword and the sceptre – in 1687.

At the time of the Jacobite rebellion, the crown was worn by James III, who was killed in 1706.

sapphire and the Black Prince's ruby among them – but since then they have been augmented by magnificent jewels like the Star of Africa, cut from the Cullinan Diamond, and the Kohinoor Diamond which adorns the Queen Mother's crown.

Tradition tells us that some of the gold used to make Scotland's crown came from that of Robert Bruce. But this cannot be proved, especially since Bruce's first crown was seized by the English and taken over the Border at the same time as the Stone of Destiny.

By the time of James IV Scotland had an elaborate royal regalia, which included an intricately-worked sceptre that had been gifted to the king in 1494 by Pope Alexander VI, father of Cesar and Lucrezia Borgia.

In 1507 James IV was given a magnificent sword of state by Pope Julius II, the man who engaged Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

When it came to the throne, James V had the sceptre remodelled

and lengthened. He also had the crown refashioned, and enhanced by the addition of 23 precious stones, and 68 extra pearls.

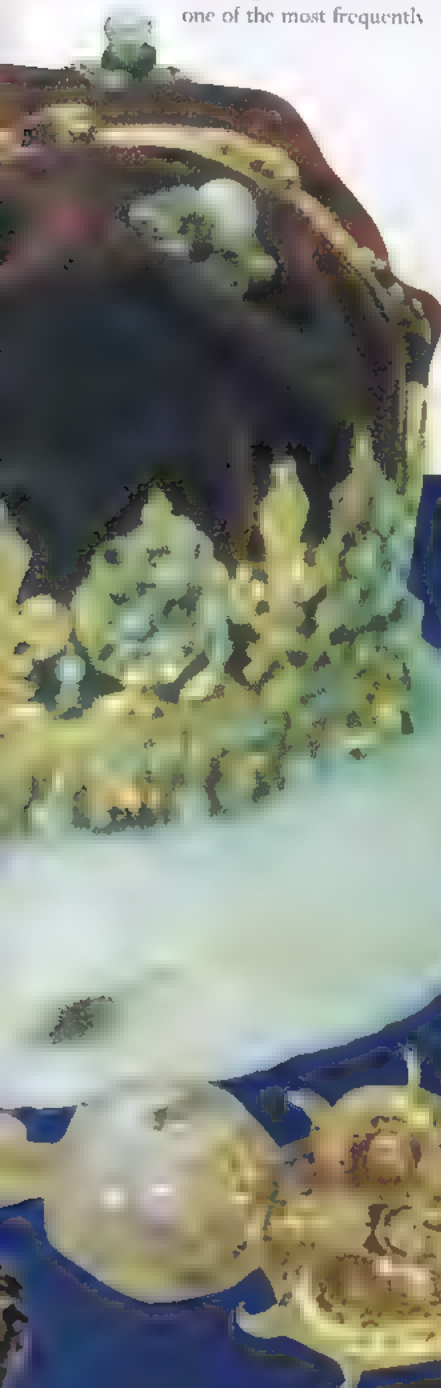
These are the Honours which we see today, with the addition of a sword-belt woven out of silk and gold thread, another gift from Pope Julius.

A richly-embroidered, sanctified hat which he sent to James at the same time has unfortunately disappeared.

This royal regalia was taken from Edinburgh to Stirling Castle and put on to the infant Mary, Queen of Scots, after the death of her father James V in 1542, so that she could be regarded as legitimately crowned. It is recorded that she howled throughout the ceremony.

Her son, James VI, was crowned in the same way, also at Stirling, in 1567.

James's son, Charles I, disclaimed his Scottish kingdom and did not come north to be crowned until 1633, eight years after succeeding to ►



Without its linings and embellishments: the Crown that gave Scots their pride back.

The Sceptre was presented to King James IV in 1494 by Pope Alexander VI. Silversmith Andrew Leys lengthened it for James V.



■ 'Burial of the Scottish Regalia' by Sir David Wilkie shows the scene at the Grangers' Kineff Old Church.

► the throne. When he did appear, the Honours were taken to Holyrood to be used in the crowning ceremony because, by this time, they represented the royal authority in Scotland and in the absence of the king were displayed on a table in the middle of a sitting Parliament.

Bills only became law when touched by the royal Sceptre. This was done at every sitting of Parliament until 1707.

In spite of Charles's indifference to his northern kingdom, when he was executed the Scots people were horrified and gave sanctuary to the young Charles II.

He was officially crowned King of Scotland at Scone in 1651, with all the Regalia being used, before he made his escape from Cromwell's

Dunnottar Castle was besieged by Cromwell's troops for a year before it fell. When it did, the Honours were not to be found

advancing armies to the Continent.

That hurried ceremony was the last time the Honours of Scotland were used to crown a monarch.

When George IV came to Scotland in 1820, he only touched the Regalia, as did the present Queen in 1953.

The Honours – Sword, Sceptre and Crown – show marks of wear as we see them today.

The Sword of State is the magnificent handiwork of an Italian called Domenico de Sutri who

engraved the name of Pope Julius on to the blade and decorated the pommel with dolphins, oak leaves and acorns.

There are marks of damage on the Scottish finial and also signs of the Sword and the scabbard having been at one time broken in half. The silver encrusted scabbard is made of wood and lined with red velvet, but again there are signs of damage.

The Sceptre was remodelled in silver and lengthened in 1536 by an Edinburgh silversmith called Adam

Leys. The finial is very fine and elaborate, showing the Blessed Virgin with her baby, and St Andrew. But the most significant feature is a pearl-topped globe of rock crystal believed to have mystical qualities.

The Crown, made for James V by Scottish jeweller Thomas Wood in 1532 and refashioned in 1540 by John Mosman of Edinburgh, is mainly made of gold mined at Crawford Moor in Clydesdale. It is encrusted with 43 precious stones and 68 pearls, and decorated with fleurs-de-lis, crosses and gold and red-enamelled oak leaves. On top is an orb of gold enamelled blue with spangled stars. The edge is rimmed with ermine and the Crown is lined with a red velvet bonnet, studded with pearls between the arches. In all, it is an awe-inspiring symbol of monarchy which the Scots were always determined to keep secure.

The greatest danger to it came during Cromwell's Protectorate, when he invaded Scotland intent on seizing the Crown Jewels and destroying them as he had done with the English regalia. When Edinburgh was threatened, the Honours were taken to Stirling before being sent to George Ogilvie of Barras at Dunnottar Castle.

It was besieged by Cromwell's troops for almost a year before it fell, but when it did, the Honours were nowhere to be found. They had been spirited away by a few brave patriots, most important among them a local minister of Kineff called Granger, and his wife Christian.

That brave woman, accompanied by her maidservant, contrived to visit a friend in the garrison and smuggled out the Crown and Sceptre under her clothes while the maid hid the Sword and scabbard in a bale of flax. The marks, which are still apparent on the Sword and scabbard, are said to have been caused by them having to be broken so they could not be seen in the flax.

For nearly eight years, the Honours were hidden by the Grangers, sometimes in the floor of their church and sometimes under their bed, but in 1660, when Charles II was restored to the throne, they were returned to Edinburgh.

Strangely, the sword-belt was only rediscovered in 1790 – in a garden wall at Barras House – and sent back to join the other Honours in Edinburgh Castle in 1892.

The people who saved the Honours paid for their patriotism,



■ Diamond-framed pendant given to Scotland by Victoria's daughter, Louise.

because Ogilvie's wife died as a result of her sufferings in prison, where she is said to have been tortured to make her yield up knowledge of the Honours' whereabouts. The Grangers were also imprisoned and Mrs Granger, too, died before the Restoration.

But the most important thing about the Honours, as the devotion of those people shows, is not the magnificence they represented, but what they meant to the people of Scotland. To them, it embodied their nationhood and because of that they guarded the regalia jealously.

After parliamentary union in 1707, the regalia was used for the last time, when the Earl of Seafield took up the sceptre to touch the finalised Treaty of Union and said sadly: "Now here's an end to an auld sang."

Then the Honours were hidden away in Edinburgh Castle, walled up in a sealed room in a high tower.

As the years passed, there were rumours that Scotland's Honours had been purloined by the English and taken south of the Border like the Stone of Destiny, which had been incorporated into the English Coronation chair.

By the beginning of the 19th

century most people sadly believed this to be the case.

Sir Walter Scott summed up the pessimism about the Honours' fate when he wrote that he feared they had "taken flight from Scotland and never stopped till they arrived at London where they remained or took another flight to Hanover".

It was Scott, however, who was instrumental in restoring them to their place of honour in Edinburgh Castle and in the Scottish psyche.

Motivated by fervent patriotism, Walter Scott of whom Thomas Carlyle once said: "No Scotsman of his time was more entirely Scottish"

became obsessed with the idea of rediscovering the lost Honours.

There was a story that they were walled up in a room in the Castle guard tower. But when a Commission had been empowered in 1794 to break down the sealed door and search for documents which might have yielded details of their whereabouts, Major Drummond, the Castle Governor, took his orders literally and did not open a large wooden chest that stood in the room.

When he shook the chest, there

was no noise. There were no documents there, he decided, and ordered the room to be sealed again.

This did not satisfy Scott, however, and when he was visiting London in 1815, he took advantage of a meeting with the Prince Regent, to request the establishment of another Commission to search for the Regalia.

Scott's patriotic enthusiasm at this time must have been infectious, for his mind was running on romantic lines, having finished his series of poems, one of which has the famous lines

*Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself has said
This is my own, my native land*

His request to the Prince met with a sympathetic response and a Commission headed by the Duke of Buccleuch was set up with Scott as one of the members.

On February 4, 1818, the members of the Commission, without the Duke who was ill, proceeded to the Castle where they nervously watched as workmen broke down the sealed oak door and an iron grille inside it to reveal a dust-shrouded chest in the dark room.

Scott said later that he had not the slightest doubt the Honours were inside the chest, which was coated with six inches of dust and looked as if it had not been disturbed for more than 100 years.

The chest was locked and the keys had been lost, so it had to be broken open, but when it was, the Commissioners stood in awe as linen-wrapped objects were pulled out, together with the lost documents of deposition. The Honours of Scotland once more saw the light of day.

When news of the discovery spread, the soldiers of the garrison cheered and the Royal Standard was hoisted. Public enthusiasm ran so high that even Scott was surprised and said in a letter: "The

discovery of the regalia has interested people's minds much more strongly than I expected, it would be of the utmost consequence that they should be occasionally shown to them."

In fact, the reappearance of the Honours aroused intense patriotism in the Scottish people – it gave them a pride that still exists today.

The Prince Regent granted permission for the Honours to be displayed to the public, but before this could be arranged Scott and other Commission members were allowed to take their families to see the rediscovered treasure.

While they stood around looking at it, one of the men lifted the crown and tried to put it on the head of a young lady beside him. Scott was horrified and put up a hand to stop what he considered to be sacrilege, crying out "God, no!" such strong reverence did he feel for the relics. His eldest daughter, Sophia, was so affected by his enthusiasm that she almost fainted.

When the Prince Regent followed his father as George IV and paid his first visit to Scotland in 1822, the recently ennobled Scott had care of the Scottish regalia which he had been instrumental in refinding.

It was carried in state from the Castle to Holyrood for the King to touch – but not to wear – and in a letter to his son, Scott described the respectful and reverent attitude of the crowds that lined the streets to watch it pass. "Their behaviour was steady and respectable," he wrote proudly "It was as if the Honour of Scotland depended on the propriety of their behaviour."

Decades later, in November, 1996, the Stone of Destiny was returned to Scotland, and now lies alongside the Honours – and other precious items gifted to the people of Scotland over the centuries.

The ancient symbols can still work their magic on people today, as they did in the past. ●

■ Ruby ring with 26 diamonds: one of four royal pieces associated with the Stewart dynasty.



Even death was no escape from torture

Hanging was quite mild compared with some agonies – like dangling from a nail by the ear

Torture was a widely recognised form of punishment in Scotland and for more than two centuries before it was finally abolished. It was seen as a good way of 'softening up' a prisoner for confession, or simply for inflicting more pain and agony on some poor soul already condemned to the hands of the public executioner.

And, of course, some devilish forms of torture became feared throughout the land. Scourging, burning, deprivation of sleep, sticking needles under fingernails, pulling the thumbs – all are documented. But the most common method of inflicting excruciating pain was using the perunkis, or thumb screws, which were used to pull the thumbs and other fingers apart, thus breaking the bones.

The screws were used to pull the thumbs and other fingers apart, thus breaking the bones.

The boot, or booties, consisted of four pieces of narrow boards nailed together 'of a competent length for the foot and heel, tightly on all sides to smash the foot'. A variation was called the cashelaw, which was fitted over the foot and leg, and then heated over a fire until it became agonisingly hot.

It is little wonder that under such torture, or even under the most brutal punishments, many people recanted whatever their torturers wanted to hear. Such as Covenanters, refused to recant under even the fiercest punishment. At their public executions with their last words.

Public punishments were brutal. Thieves were branded on the ear to the mercat cross, banished from town, or, for repeated offences, sentenced to the stocks. Slanderers or scolds could be sentenced to the 'cuck' – an iron headpiece often with a spike which was laid across the tongue.

Branding was not uncommon. Noses were pinched with clips and an iron frame. Perjurors had their tongues cut out or bored. Dooking in the Nor Loch was a capital punishment in Edinburgh, and transportation to the emerging colonies was also an option open to the courts.

Not even in death were you guaranteed peace. In 1603 Francis Mowbray was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle facing charges of high treason when he managed to escape from his cell. But he fell from the castle rock to his death.

King James VI was so incensed that he drew up a



■ The Maiden in action in Edinburgh's Parliament Square. In its grim life, it beheaded 100 people.

Witch's collar (right) from Ladybank Fife. It held offenders by the neck while exposed to jeers of passers-by.

Branks (left): an iron gag used on suspected witches, with plate passing over tongue to maul.

Thumbscrew (below) from Montrose Angus.

Jougs (below) from Old Church of Clova, Angus.

Manacles with chains (below) often used on witch hunts.

Close-up of The Maiden, efficient beheading machine, from Edinburgh.

warrant to the Court of Justiciary, stating that Mowbray by attempting to escape had shown himself to be guilty of "most high, horrible and detestable points of treason"

The warrant, signed by the king himself, ordered the court to pronounce sentence on the deceased Francis Mowbray "now presented at the bar".

In other words, the man's body was propped up in court and the king's sentence enacted – "to be dismembered as a traitor, his body to be hanged on a gibbet, and afterwards quartered; his head and limbs stuck on conspicuous places in the city of Edinburgh; and his whole estates forfeited"

As one report concludes: "Doom was pronounced accordingly, and the sentence carried out." It was a brutal reminder that the King's revenge could stretch beyond the grave, and doubtless a large crowd turned out to see the public executioner, or lockman, carry out the dreadful butchery of a corpse

Executions in Scotland were public events until the middle of the 19th century. The last public one in Edinburgh, for instance, was as late as 1864

In early days, the executioner wielded a large axe or sword to behead his 'customers' but other methods came in, particularly hanging

Initially, before gallows with a drop platform were generally introduced, a prisoner would simply be left to dangle on the end of a rope until he was choked to death. Sometimes the executioner swung on his legs to speed up the process

The Maiden, a precursor to the guillotine used in the French Revolution, was popular in Edinburgh for a time to dispatch the condemned, and another was effective in Aberdeen

Sometimes people facing the death penalty for theft and other offences would be given the option of becoming bound slaves, forced to wear riveted iron collars round their necks, and sent to work in silver mines or coal pits. Another punishment which entertained the masses in towns throughout

Scotland was a public whipping, often through the streets. At Fortrose in 1698, for instance, a woman was convicted of receiving stolen goods. She was given 12 lashes in each of the town's four streets

The last flogging in the streets of Glasgow was in 1793, and in Edinburgh three men were whipped the length of the High Street in 1822

The nailing of ears to a burgh's mercat cross for a variety of crimes was a common punishment. In 1546 one John Fisher was convicted of stealing clothes and sentenced to be nailed by an ear to a wooden post, to have the other ear cut off, to be branded on the cheek, whipped through the streets, and banished never to return under threat of death

A few years later two 'Englisches' were bound at Edinburgh cross for drinking the King's health. They received 39 strokes of the whip, had their 'lugs naillit' to the gallows.

"The ane had his lug cuttitt from the ruitt with a razor, the other being also naillitt to the gibbet had his mouth skobitt, and his tong being drawn out the full length, was bound together betwixt twa sticks, hard togadder for the space of half one hour thereby."

One of the fascinations for onlookers at an ear-nailing was to see when the terrified victim would work up courage enough to rip his ear free

There seemed to be a certain acceptance by poor folk in particular that an inflicted punishment was the right of their 'betters'

The proprietor of Ballindalloch found a poor man guilty and sent him into the prison pit until the gallows were prepared. The accused swore he would kill the first man to lay a hand on him, but his wife counselled him. "Come up quietly and he hanged, and do not anger the laird."

Landowners frequently conducted their own form of justice, very rough and ready, but sometimes surprisingly lenient to their own folk. Often, however, it was carried out swiftly at the end of a rope

The town prisons, or tolbooths, into which people were thrown to await trial were dark, dirty,

intimidating places, although latterly felons were outnumbered by debtors. Hugo Arnot, Edinburgh's historian, describes a visit he made in 1779 to the notorious Tolbooth which stood in the High Street next to St Giles' Cathedral

All parts of the jail were kept in a slovenly condition, and the eastern quarters where prisoners were housed was simply "intolerable". Filth and stench prevailed as the drainage hole was blocked

In the iron room where condemned prisoners were held he found three boys, one about 14, the others 12. And in another room "such an insufferable stench assailed us, from the stagnant and putrid air of the room, as, not withstanding our precautions, utterly to overpower us".

Debtors predominated among the prisoners Arnot found on his visit. One of the older punishments for them was to be clamped into wooden stocks wearing a yellow hat or costume, there to be heckled by the crowd who would often scoop refuse from the street to hurl at them

The Church also was involved in meting out punishments. Its attitude to children born out of wedlock was so unforgiving that many a poor woman opted to kill her new-born child rather than face merciless censure for immorality. But the hapless women faced death if they were discovered doing away with their children. In 1681 seven were executed at one time at Edinburgh; and in 1705 four Aberdeen women died for the same offence

Others who fell victim to the kirk session rules of behaviour were adulterers. They were sentenced to stand in the jougs – an iron collar fixed to a chain outside the church where they faced congregational ridicule and scorn. Some women who "lapsed into immorality again" might have their heads shaved and be forced to stand in full public view at the town's mercat cross

Gradually, the barbarity of punishments, particularly in public, came to be recognised as out of step with progressive thinking, and a new system of criminal proceedings came to be introduced in Scotland ●

Still the heart of the arts went on beating

Scotland's culture took quite a battering in the Reformation, but it was far from being killed off

One of the biggest casualties of the social and cultural changes imposed by the Reformation was music. Looking back now, from an age when recorded music is everywhere, and the sound can be sent around the world by computer, it's hard to imagine a time when music could be lost for ever. Yet this happened in 16th century Scotland, and so our knowledge of what musicians were playing and singing at that time is incomplete.

Music was written down in manuscript form, just as it is now, but in times of religious and political upheaval some music which did not conform to changes in doctrine was deliberately destroyed.

Just as the Reformation led to the destruction of many of Scotland's sacred objects, so it caused the loss of a large body of church music.

Along with the royal court, the church was an important early sponsor of musical activity. But in the 1550s and 60s, the more intricate, original and exciting devotional music was about to come under the 'joyless veto' of the Reformation, with much written record of it destroyed.

A vicar of St Andrews, Thomas Wode, wrote in the late 16th century of this weeding out by the zealous Reformers: "I cannot understand bot





■ This painting of a masque gives an indication of the make-up of a late 16th-century 'consort'. The musicians are playing (clockwise) flute, lute, mandora, viol, cittern and violin. It demonstrates how music continued to be part of cultural life after the Reformation.

musick sall pereishe in this land alutterlye."

But in fact, some of the great religious part-songs did survive in manuscripts which were passed around among the Catholic community and the music schools.

Sometimes, though, the Reformation period is blamed for the loss of compositions that were just carelessly mislaid. In 1934, a collection of early manuscripts was discovered in Panmure House, near Forfar, once a home of the Earls of Dalhousie. These included some pieces written around 1625 for the virginals, an early type of harpsichord, by a Scot called William Kinloch.

Another manuscript revealed for the first time a series of Scottish airs written for the cittern, a kind of lute played with a plectrum, and is the only known Scottish score written for that instrument. So there is always the chance of new discoveries shedding light on our musical past.

To the Reformers of the 1550s and 60s, existing church music was as elitist and as discredited as the Church itself. While this helps explain the zeal with which musical manuscripts were destroyed, it also hints at what musical forms would be adopted instead.

Popular folk ballads were an obvious choice. In Dundee, perhaps the strongest reforming burgh, a well-known example of Reformation church music was produced. The 'Gude and Godly Ballads', a compendium of evangelical hymns and populist ballads, was gathered together some time before 1560 by James and John Wedderburn, sons of a Dundee merchant, and published in its existing form in 1565.

Evidence that the Reformation decades did not witness a total purge of culture can be also be found at the court of King James VI. That king is best remembered for his learning and the fact that he wrote poetry, however indifferently.

He was multilingual, often complaining that he was fluent in Latin before he was able to speak in the Scots tongue.

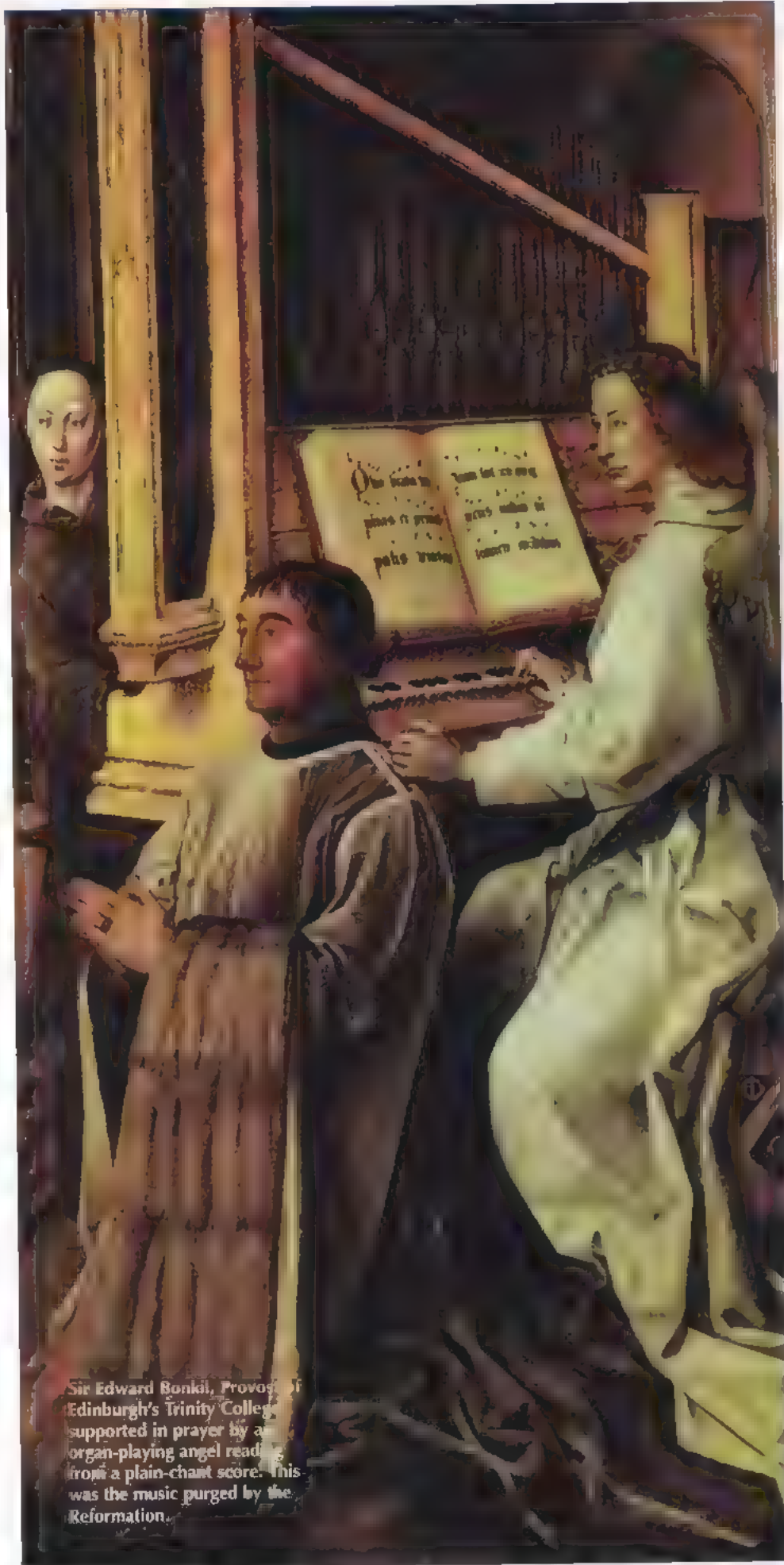
James surrounded himself with writers and poets, such as William Drummond of Hawthornden, whose father held the title of 'gentleman usher' and who had studied law in France and Flanders.

Drummond wrote much verse in the European style. His 'Teares on the Death of Meliades' mourned the death – from typhoid – of James's oldest son, Prince Henry, in 1612, while still in his teens.

Henry would have been the first undisputed heir to the joint thrones of Scotland and England and might well have been a smarter monarch than the younger brother who became Charles I.

Some of James's circle of poets, who became known as 'The Castilian Band', were clearly sycophants and possibly even predecessors of the public relations industry.

With the continued development of the printing press, it became increasingly possible to broadcast opinions to a wider public. And James was heralded as the new Solomon (wise king), the new ►



Sir Edward Bonkil, Provost of Edinburgh's Trinity College, supported in prayer by an organ-playing angel reading from a plain-chant score. This was the music purged by the Reformation.



Timothy Pont's early 16th-century maps, such as this one of Orkney and Shetland, were extremely accurate.

▶ Constantine (Christian ruler) and a new faith (leading his followers into a promised land). All of this has the distinct smell of flattery.

Yet the King had earned his way into this literary circle by his own output. Most of his published work had to do with the role of the monarchy. His *True Lawe of Free Monarchie*, published in 1598, defended his belief in a king's God-given rights.

Next year James's 'Basilicon Doron' (the kingly gift) was a book of instruction addressed to his heir, Henry. His advice included the suggestion that a monarch should avoid boozing and bad language, which was ~~not~~ under the circumstances, for these were certainly among James's notable traits.

Yet this book was an early best-seller, reprinted several times and translated into several European languages. Here was surely the emergence of the author as a celebrity. For James's eventual emergence as the ruler of two kingdoms made his views seem significant.

He followed this up with 'Counterblast to Tobacco', an anti-smoking tract which pointed out that the habit was not only "hateful to the nose" but also "dangerous to the lungs".

More proof that the Reformation did not kill off culture was the fact that James VI's reign saw the emergence of Scotland's first outstanding portrait painter. George Jameson, who began his apprenticeship in Aberdeen and became known as 'the Scottish van Dyck'.

It was also during James's time in Edinburgh that the European custom of the painted ceiling became fashionable among the Scots nobility.

"Scottish houses of any standing," we have been



told, "were decorated with gaiety, freedom and confidence, the outcome of a nation in the throes of intellectual expansion."

Post Reformation Scotland also gave the world the first mathematical genius of the modern age John Napier, of Merchiston.

It was a nation that, for the first time, could have some inkling of its true geography. Timothy Pont, a churchman from St Andrews, became the first cartographer to make a near accurate survey of the kingdom in the early 17th century. His revised maps were not published until 1654, some decades after his death.

Despite the cultural successes of the court after the Reformation, it was inevitable that any royal influence on Scotland's music would diminish with the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when Scotland no longer had a court in permanent residence.

But music continued as an important element in the cultural life of the nation's capital, and in 1695 Edinburgh's first public concert was held in St Cecilia's Hall which is used for recitals to this day. Works by Italian composers were performed by a 30-strong orchestra described as "19 gentlemen of rank and 11 professionals".

Indeed, the capital was said to be swarming with amateur players and provided work for many foreign musicians.

The wanton destruction of manuscripts and the suppression of 'ungodly' musical styles typify the worst aspects of the Reformation.

But the Reformers' adaptation of popular musical styles along with the profusion of cultural patronage at the Royal Court, exemplify how cultural development and expression in Scotland was able to continue in new forms. ●

CHURCH IN THE EYE OF REFORM STORM

St Giles Cathedral, situated by Edinburgh's High Street on the Royal Mile, is one of the most significant historic sites of the Reformation.

It is now a massive structure that almost overshadows the neo-classical High Court building behind it.

Subject to numerous architectural alterations over the centuries, its exterior was radically remodelled at the turn of the 19th century.

It was once at the centre of the turmoil of the Scottish Reformation of 1560.

At that time St Giles was the single parish church in which Edinburgh's population of about 10,000 worshipped. It had been so for more than four centuries before.

But as events progressed during the revolution, St Giles became the hotbed in which the radical changes that Edinburgh were put into effect.

In September 1560, in what hitherto the most spectacular show of Protestant feeling, a riot ended the traditional annual procession through the city.

The 'idol of Sanct Giles' was seized by the mob and thrown into the nearby Nor Loch, a local sewer.

As the reformers strived to ensure they had a way to go before they were in a dominant position in St Giles. The last time this happened was in 1560, when a mixture of Catholic clergy and Protestant 'Lords of the Congregation' tenanted the church jointly.

The Reformers' victory was symbolically sealed when John Knox, the veteran Lutheran firebrand, later became the first minister of the church. It was from that church's pulpit that in August, 1561, Knox delivered his infamous attack on the Catholic hierarchy and its claims to the new faith.

The connection with Knox extends into the Kirkyard of St Giles, where the preacher was buried in 1572.

The spot is now covered by the car park of the High Court of Scotland, and the only sign Knox is here is a

small, yellow plaque in car lot No 44.

The Reformers split up the parish of St Giles into what eventually became four parishes situated in four quarters of the burgh, marking a radical departure with Edinburgh's past.

Present-day visitors to St Giles can gain an insight into the original idea of separate parishes to bring church services much closer to the people, the interior of the building was initially divided by partition walls.

Although deeply symbolic, the reconstruction of St Giles' interior didn't adequately meet the Reformers' needs.

By the 1590s, such was the rise in

Edinburgh's population that the existing church was no longer adequate. Buildings were erected north and south of the High Street.

Armed with this news, the presbytery demanded eight model parishes, each catering for 1,000 parishioners, but

only four were built. It took more than four decades before the programme of building separate churches was complete.

Of the three new parish churches the Reformers erected, two still survive.

Greyfriars Kirk, now situated behind Candlemaker Row in view of the new National Museum of Scotland, was the

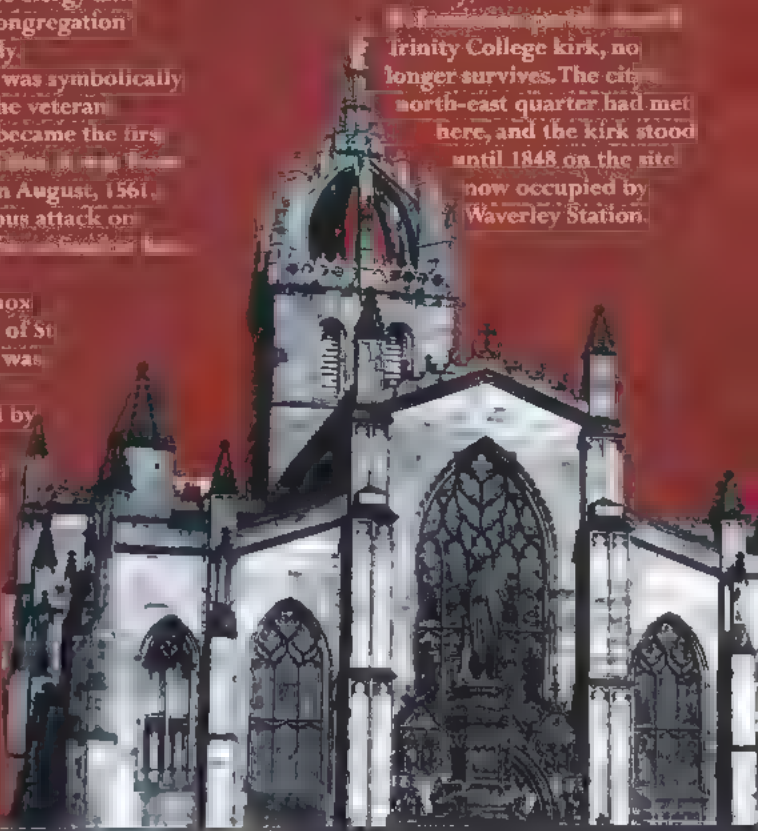
first to be built. It didn't open until 1620.

Work on Christ's Kirk at the Tron, by South Bridge on the Royal Mile, in the south-east, did not begin until 1636 (finished in 1647).

Sadly, the fourth

Trinity College kirk, no longer survives. The city north-east quarter had met here, and the kirk stood until 1848 on the site now occupied by Waverley Station.

Revolution hotbed: St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh's Royal Mile.



'YOU HAVE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE'

That's what Paddy Meehan told the judge after being jailed for life as a killer. He was proved right after seven years – and a media campaign

At long last, Paddy Meehan, who had served seven years for a murder he did not commit, was to be freed with a historic Royal Pardon. But as he had agreed to give his story exclusively to one Scottish national newspaper, he had to take certain security actions to stop the rest of Britain's press and TV teams getting a word – or a glimpse.

So before going through the gates of grim Peterhead Prison for the last time, he had to lie flat on the back seat of his Aberdeen lawyer's car with a rug covering him from head to foot. Outside, a large crowd of reporters and cameramen waited for the man whose release was making nation wide headlines. The large gates swung open, and the car swept out at high speed.

A mile or so down the road to Aberdeen, with the press pack in hot pursuit, the car turned off down a minor road, with cars blocking the road to stop anyone following. Paddy was then pulled out of the car and thrown into another to be raced to a helicopter waiting nearby.

He was bundled into it, and it took off immediately. But low mist prevented the pilot from landing at the large country mansion hotel for champagne celebrations. Instead, he had to land in a field nearby, and Paddy's 'minders' had to hitch a lift from the bemused driver of a passing delivery van. Paddy was ejected from the chopper and, after running across the muddy field, was heaved through the van's back doors.

As it trundled along the country road to meet up with his wife and waiting pressmen, Paddy shook his head and said with a rueful smile: "A Royal Pardon? It's more like a jail break!"

An amusing end to a famous seven-year battle that was far from funny for Meehan – and lawyers, journalists and author/TV personality Ludovic Kennedy, who all fought to end what was a terrible scar on the face of Scottish justice.

Admittedly, Paddy was a well-known criminal, a specialist safe-breaker jailed for such in both England and Scotland – but not for violence. So how did he end up on trial for a brutal murder?

In July, 1969, the bungalow home in Ayr of wealthy bingo hall owner Abraham Ross was broken into and he and his wife Rachel, 72, were beaten up, bound and gagged. The two masked raiders – who called each other Pat and Jim – left them trussed up and Mrs Ross later died in hospital. The names were enough for the police to

interview Patrick Connolly Meehan, who was friendly with another criminal, an Englishman called Jim Griffiths.

The fact that experienced criminals would never use their real names in front of witnesses was conveniently pushed aside.

The murder squad detectives, desperate to clear up the messy case which shocked the seaside resort and the rest of Scotland, couldn't believe their luck when Patrick Connolly Meehan frankly admitted he and Griffiths had driven past Ayr that night on their way from Glasgow to Stranraer.

He lied that they had driven there to look at a car to buy – but at his trial later admitted they had gone to look over a road tax office and a bank to raid. But that was enough for the police. When Meehan was arrested and charged with the murder, he told the officers: "You are making the biggest mistake of your life. I can prove that I was in Stranraer that night."

When they went to arrest Rochdale-born Griffiths at his flat in Holyrood Crescent, Glasgow, the crook, who once told a TV documentary that he would never be taken alive, tried to shoot his way to freedom. He died with a police bullet in his heart.

For the police, this was confirmation beyond doubt that both were guilty. The Crown Office even made the unprecedented move of issuing a statement which said: "With the death of Griffiths and the apprehension of Meehan, the police are no longer looking for any other person suspected of implication in the incident concerning Mr and Mrs Ross at Ayr."

This was to be blasted as a blunder 13 years later by the judge appointed to probe the whole Meehan saga. But objections to it then by Meehan's lawyer, Joe Beltrami, fell on deaf ears in the Crown Office: "It will now be nearly impossible for my client to have a fair trial. It might well appear to some that he is now required to prove his innocence, whereas Scots law requires the prosecution to prove his guilt."

So the police now had to find the evidence to prove it all. Forensic science experts had carefully examined all productions – including clothing and the safe in the Ross house that had been rifled but found nothing.

Yet, in August, all of a sudden fragments of paper were found in Griffiths' car coat pocket. A senior detective suddenly recalled seeing scraps of



■ Paddy Meehan received a Royal Pardon.

similar paper... sets of fragments were forensically... incredibly, were found to match... exactly where they had been torn.

Mr Ross had already told police that neither of the raiders... wearing coats. But a mere trifle like this... later the police in Ayrshire... when this evidence was given by the senior officer at Paddy's trial, seasoned journalists shook their heads in disbelief.

Paddy's... found to have gravel in them which was... to the gravel on the roof of the murder...

Even the identity parade was a shambles. Paddy and other men were to repeat the phrase used by one of the raiders... they would send an ambulance... Paddy, first in the line-up, repeated the phrase... Mr Ross, still suffering from the attack, collapsed... saying "That's the voice." No one else was...

To make matters worse, when the trial began in Edinburgh in October, 1969, it was soon clear that Paddy's flamboyant defence counsel, Nicholas Fairbairn (later to become Solicitor General for Scotland), was not looked upon favourably by the short-tempered judge, Lord Grant.

There were many clashes between them that



■ The bungalow near Ayr's seafront where Rachel Ross died after being beaten up and gagged.

raised legal eyebrows - and which came to a head during Fairbairn's speech to the jury

Normally, a judge never interrupts counsel, but Lord Grant did - twice. In a loud, gravelly voice, he told Fairbairn: "Will you stop trying to mislead the jury?"

And later: "The jury will know how to deal with those sort of submissions"

Afterwards, Fairbairn admitted "I was close to losing self-control and bursting into tears."

The jury, hardly surprisingly, returned a verdict of guilty by a majority of nine to six, and Lord Grant sentenced the accused to life imprisonment

As he stood in the dock, Paddy - his voice slightly trembling - told the judge: "I want to say this, sir I am innocent of the crime and so is James Griffiths. You have made a terrible mistake."

In his voluntary solitary confinement, as a protest against his conviction, Paddy sat in his lonely cell night after night studying law books, and writing to anyone who would help him. He soon heard on the jail grapevine that a small-time Glasgow criminal, Ian Waddell, had boasted of taking part in the murder, and his accomplice was a well-known violent villain, William 'Tank' McGuinness

What he didn't know was the truly startling fact that two officers had stopped McGuinness on the night of the raid - just a few streets away from the murder house. McGuinness spun them a yarn, and they gave him a lift to the bus station.

They didn't report this to the murder squad and, when their report was finally unearthed just days before Paddy's trial, it was not passed onto the Crown Office.

But in 1973 Waddell admitted to two BBC reporters that he had taken part in the murder and, in a two hour tape recorded interview with two newspaper reporters, he listed 15 details of the Ross bungalow layout

He also revealed for the first time details of a gold watch he had stolen from the house. When Mr Ross was told of the watch description, he

gasped, staggered back from his bungalow door and said. "I can't believe it. I was so shocked I forgot all about that watch and never even told the police about it"

Piece by piece, the jigsaw of an awful miscarriage of justice was slowly beginning to take shape. The momentum was pushed along in 1976 when respected investigative author and television presenter Ludovic Kennedy published *A Presumption of Innocence*, his damning book on the controversial case

Later that year, 'Tank' McGuinness, who was rumoured to have murdered five people, was found dead after a mystery street attack.

At one stage he had confessed to his lawyer, Beltrami, that he had taken part in the murder, but the lawyer had to keep it secret because of the confidentiality code between lawyer and client.

Now Beltrami was free to tell the Crown Office. A full police probe into the Meehan case was ordered, and they uncovered the report of McGuinness being at the scene

The Solicitor General for Scotland, John McCluskey, and the then Scottish Secretary Bruce Millan recommended a Royal Pardon - and weeks later in 1976 Paddy walked out of jail a free man, bitter but triumphant

In November, 1976, this bizarre case took another strange twist. Waddell went on trial accused of the Ross murder while acting along with McGuinness

The judge, Lord Robertson, appeared to disagree with politicians interfering with judges' work by freeing Meehan, and in his charge to the Waddell jury thundered: "There is no legal justification whatsoever in saying that Meehan was wrongly convicted." Again, hardly surprisingly, the jury took only an hour to find Waddell not guilty

But he was not to survive for much longer in his violent underworld. In May, 1982, he was found strangled - in a shallow grave in Springburn, Glasgow

And that seemed to be that. Meehan wrongly



■ Abraham and Rachel Ross: she died in hospital.

convicted of a murder he didn't commit, but free. The two men said to be the killers now both themselves murdered

But not quite. Later in 1982 Lord Hunter came out with his long three year inquiry report into the Meehan saga - and threw an astonishing new theory into the murder mystery

He amazingly claimed all four - Meehan, Griffiths, McGuinness and Waddell - were involved in the crime. However, this was generally derided, and in 1984 the Tory Government accepted Meehan's innocence by upping his compensation from an original 'derisory' figure of £7,000 to £50,415

But he had only 10 years left to spend it. In August, 1994, Meehan died of throat cancer in a Swansea hospice

The last actor in one of Scotland's most complex murder mysteries had left the stage ●

The unmanned light



■ The Flannan lighthouse: there was no sign of life when the alarmed captain of the approaching relief vessel *Hesperus* focused his telescope on it.

What happened to the three keepers who should have been manning the Flannan Light? After they vanished, theories came thick and fast

*Though three men dwell on Flannan Isle,
To keep the lamp alight;
As we steered under the lee we caught
No glimmer through the night*

The mystery of what happened to the three keepers of the Flannan Light has prompted much fantastic theorising and confounded thousands of people intrigued by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson's epic poem on the affair, written largely from the imagination 12 years after it happened in December, 1900.

The riddle has echoes of the *Marie Celeste*, for the men who should have been tending the light on Eilean Mor — one of the larger of the seven Flannan Islands, 18 miles north west of Lewis — simply vanished.

They could not have left by boat, for they did not have one. And when the relief tender *Hesperus* arrived there 11 days later, the crew found, in the words of the poem, only "a door ajar, an untouched meal and an overtopped chair".

As they had approached through a fierce gale to within sight of the

chunky, 330ft light tower, the absence of the usual welcoming flag was the first sign all was not well.

It was dark, about noon on Boxing Day. The ship's steam whistle and siren were blasted, but there was no response from the blank windows.

With mounting alarm, Captain James Harvie adjusted his telescope to scan the lighthouse, its squat outbuilding, and the long stone stairway which connected these, down an almost sheer cliffside, to the eastern landing stage. Seeing no sign of life he ordered a boat out.

As the sea buffeted his tiny vessel against the landing stage, a relieving keeper, Joseph Moore, managed to jump ashore.

He climbed the 160 steps up the 200ft cliffside, calling out the names of the colleagues he hoped to find at the top — James Ducat, Thomas Marshall and Donald McArthur. But all he received in reply were the shrieking cries of gulls.

"I went up and, on coming to the entrance gate," he later wrote, "I found it closed. I made for the door leading to the kitchen and store

room. I found it closed. The door inside that was also closed, but the kitchen door itself was open."

Going into the kitchen, he found the table set as if a meal were about to begin. Apart from the upturned chair, everything seemed normal, though the clock had stopped.

"I saw that the fire was not lighted for some days. I entered the rooms in succession and found the beds empty. I did not take time to search further, for I well knew something serious had occurred. I darted outside and made for the landing."

There, he announced his fears to the waiting boatmen and persuaded two of them to join his investigation.

They found everything in good order. Blinds were on the windows, pots and pans had been cleaned, the kitchen tidied up. And on the professional side, the lamp had been trimmed, the oil fountains and canteens filled up, and the lens and machinery cleaned.

It all seemed perfectly correct, apart from the fact that the keepers had disappeared.

Bewildered as he was, Moore still



■ How the light was regularly relieved... before it went automatic in 1971.

had a job to do. The two seamen helped him get the light back to work then, over the next two days, they kept searching for the keepers.

But "despite traversing the island from end to end, there was nothing to convince us how it happened".

Meanwhile, the *Hesperus* had raced to Lewis to telegraph to the Northern Lighthouse Board in Edinburgh: "A dreadful accident has happened at Flannans. The three keepers, Ducat, Marshall and the Occasional, have disappeared from the island. Poor fellows, they must have been blown over the cliffs or drowned trying to secure a crane or something like that."

The captain's view on the cause of the men's disappearance is now one of a plethora of ideas put forward over the years. Among these is a similar one suggested by their superintendent, Robert Muirhead.

To appreciate the various theories, however, one has to picture the shape and topography of Eilean Mor.

It is like a dog's head (mouth on the right) with the light in its eye socket, the east landing under its chin, and the west landing up a high-sided, wave-lashed creek where a collar would be.

A 400-yard incline rises from the west landing to the light.

Muirhead, reporting to the light commissioners, pointed out that the last entry on 'the slate' (where notes were chalked before logging) had been made by Ducat, principal keeper, on the morning of December 15.

A passing US tramp steamer, the *Archtor*, had not seen the light that evening, so it could be assumed the men had vanished between the slate-writing and the time they should

have lit the light that afternoon.

The *Archtor* had also reported "a very heavy sea" in the area that day. Muirhead therefore focused on the possibility of the men being washed or blown away while working together on an emergency either outside the light or at one of the landing stages. He concluded that it was at the west landing that the men had met their fate.

"After careful examination of the place, the railings, ropes etc, and weighing all the evidence," he wrote, "I am of the opinion that the most likely explanation is that the men had all gone down on the afternoon... to the proximity of the West landing, to secure the box with the mooring ropes etc, and that an unexpectedly large roller had come up on the Island, and a large body of water going up higher than where they were, and coming down upon them, had swept them away with resistless force."

There are, however, weaknesses about this. Both senior men's oilskins were missing, as if they had gone out with a purpose. But all three men would not be out at the same time (the code was that a lighthouse should never be unmanned) unless the last man was called to a dire emergency.

But if such an emergency happened at the west landing, how could the last man — Donald McArthur — have been summoned to it? Neither visual signal nor a shout could have reached him.

Yet the facts that the kitchen chair was toppled and that McArthur's coat and wellingtons were left behind suggest he did indeed dash out — in his shirt sleeves, into a freezing December day. But if he was in such a hurry, why would he



■ Up a high-sided creek, a 400-yard incline rises from the west landing.

shut doors and gates behind him?

Which is not to say that other theories are more plausible. Some superstitious Hebridean islanders believe the men were whisked away by giant seabirds, a thought inspired by a 'reincarnation' suggestion in Gibson's poem, which alludes to "three queer black ugly birds... like seamen sitting bolt-upright upon a half-tide reef".

No idea has seemed too bizarre to explain the mystery. What about the spirit in St Flannan's Chapel, the 6th century ruin that shares the bare plateau of Eilean Mor with the lighthouse? It had been surely offended by the inauguration, exactly one year before, of the intrusive light-flashing monument to modern man's lack of respect for the island's sacred peace. And just as surely, it had taken its revenge!

Then there was the murder theory. Boredom and contempt-breeding familiarity had driven the cooped-up men to hatred of each other. When one cracked, he went wild, fighting the other men into the sea just outside the lighthouse, then jumping in himself in a fit of remorse.

Donald Macleod, one of the last keepers to work on Flannan before the light went automatic in 1971, was sure such a struggle took place. His

theory: "One of the men went berserk. Another tried to calm him, found this impossible, and called for help. As the third man ran out of the kitchen to separate his colleagues, he knocked over the chair. Then the three struggled and fell to their death."

There is another theory that the keepers might have seen something they should not have. Perhaps a potential enemy's new, top-secret warship. Even a revolutionary British craft on offshore trials. Did its officers, realising that the wrong eyes had fallen upon them, send out a party to cleanly and efficiently remove the problem by 'disposing' of the men?

In July, 1901, after months of studying reports, the Crown decided not to hold an inquiry.

But Superintendent Muirhead's death-by-drowning conclusion will doubtless become the accepted version of events. And perhaps that is how it should be, for he was the man best qualified in professional and personal terms to have his opinion go down on the official record.

He was also with the keepers just over a week before the tragedy. And he later noted, in touching words: "I have the melancholy recollection that I was the last person to shake hands with them and bid them adieu." ●

Where the stone was thrown to spark the turmoil of reform



Perth was the centre of the big change that still works on our society today, says biker historian David Ross

Religious divide in Scotland has always been a catalyst for more than debate. Cunning and guile always come to the fore, usually resulting in bloodshed where matters of faith are at stake. Even our football teams suffer from the blight of sectarianism. I realised at a young age that the west of Scotland must be the only place in the world where, when kids are asked what is the opposite of blue, they reply 'green'.

The early days of change from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism in Scotland were not as clean-cut as they at first appear. Though many in the Catholic Church hierarchy were considered corrupt, Protestantism was seen as playing into the hands of England. The Auld Alliance with France, Scotland's staunchly Catholic ally, was a complicating factor in what was a cause for much deliberation.

St Andrews was the site of much of the early upheaval – an obvious location, as it was always an ecclesiastical centre. One of the earliest martyrs of the Reformation was George Wishart. He was burned at the stake outside the Castle of St Andrews, and the spot in the street is marked by a cobbled inlay – of the initials 'GW'.

Cardinal Beaton, of St Andrews, who ordered this execution, was himself assailed and murdered within the castle,

and his body hung from a window.

A French force blasted its way into the castle and removed the Protestants from within. They were sent to the galleys to be chained to the oars. One of those was John Knox.

St Andrews Castle is open to the public, and although much of it is in ruins, the bottle dungeon in the Sea Tower, all 24ft of it, and the mine, a siege tunnel dug in 1546, should not be missed.

A monument to some of the early religious martyrs burned at St Andrews stands near the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. John Knox's first public sermon was delivered in St Andrews in 1547, in the Holy Trinity Church in South Street.

The one huge drawback of the Reformation was the destruction caused by mobs who were determined to smash anything that smacked of 'Papistry'.

This unfortunately involved ornate decoration within our churches, including statues, paintings or even tombs. Incredibly, the tomb of Robert Bruce in Dunfermline Abbey was destroyed. A huge loss – though the body was found when the abbey was rebuilt in the early 1800s, and replaced under a fine, ornate plaque which can be visited just inside the abbey entrance.

The first church to undergo this destruction was St John's Church in Perth. This was one of the greatest and

oldest religious buildings in Scotland. So much so that the town was originally called St John's Town of Perth. This name survives in the name of the local football team, St Johnstone.

In 1559, John Knox gave a sermon here, declaring that idolatry was "odious to God's presence". The following day, May 11th, when a priest opened the tabernacle on the altar, a young boy threw a stone at him. It missed the priest, but smashed the tabernacle. This deed acted as a signal to the congregation and they began to smash all the ornamentation in the building. News of this spread, and soon the same destruction was taking place at Scone, St Andrews, Stirling, Linlithgow and at churches in Edinburgh, including Holyrood.

St John's Church is open to the public and stands in the heart of modern Perth, west of St John's Street. The modern interior is relatively austere compared to pre-Reformation days.

As it stands today, the church is of various dates of construction, but the square central tower is the oldest part. It contains several bells, the oldest being the St John the Baptist Bell, dated 1400. Mentions of this church go as far back as our earliest records, some accounts ascribing it to Pictish times.

A visit here takes you back through every era of written Scottish history. ●



■ St John's Church in Perth: mentions of it go back to the earliest records.

Scotland's Story

Anderston Quay, Glasgow, G3 8DA

Telephone: 0141-242-1493

e-mail: scotlandstory@sundaymail.co.uk

Website Address: www.scotlands-story.co.uk

Consultants

Professor Edward J Cowan, Head of Scottish History, University of Glasgow.

Professor Christopher Whatley, Head of History, University of Dundee.

Ian Nimmo, chairman.

Editor Alex MacLeod

Assistant editor Allan Burnett

Design Samantha Ramsay

Chief sub-editor Richard Wilson

Picture editor Naomi Small

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Knox Dispensing the Sacrament by Sir

David Wilkie: SNPG. p12/13/14/15

John Knox Preaching to the

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Editor-in-Chief Iain King

Senior editor Austin Barrett

Consultant Hugh Currie

Group Advertising Sales Manager

Suzie Cairns Tel: 0141 242 1444

Circulation and Marketing Director

Fred Governo

Circulation Manager Rita Nimmo

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Financial Controller Jonathan Platt

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SCOTLAND'S STORY

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MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

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